

CONFIDENTIAL

DD/S

72-3243

DDTS REGISTRY

FILE

Medical

17 August 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Support

SUBJECT : Midcareer Assessment

1. Following the first weekend conference [] the OMS Committee for the Behavioral Sciences considered the problem of selection of managers. Both the Psychiatric and the Psychological Services Staffs were requested to present their combined views. From that exercise came the belief that we should try the Assessment Center technique in the Agency, and that this should be designed in accordance with Agency requirements and capabilities. We have recently concluded a series of discussions with the Office of Security which prefers to pass at this time. We intend to pursue the matter with other DD/S offices in the belief that the procedure will be helpful and might catch fire for other parts of the Agency.

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2. The idea of assessment techniques being used for midcareer selection and development purposes promotes a broader concept of career interest as a continuum. Dr. [] touches on this point in the concluding paragraph of his attached memorandum. While the entire picture of career development is not needed for assessment utilization, the direction of effort to a more holistic concept is of value.

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[]

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JOHN R. TIETJEN, M.S.D.
Director of Medical Services

Attachment

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16 August 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Executive Officer, Office of Medical Services

SUBJECT : Executive Director's note to the DDS
re "Mid-Career Assessment"

REFERENCE : Article: "Professional Development:
Identification of Managerial Potential",
by Raymond Pomerleau

1. The Executive Director's expression of interest in this subject coincides with a series of recent discussions within the Behavioral and Social Sciences Committee, OMS, on this very topic. In the course of these discussions, we explored in some depth the kinds of management assessment programs which aim to identify managerial potential as described in the referenced article. In most cases, such programs utilize what has become known as the "Assessment Center" concept, the unique feature of which is the close involvement of line managers in the assessment process. Subjects participate in a variety of work-sample performance tasks, devised with the help of behavioral scientists who serve as technical advisors and consultants. Judgments of the performance of the candidates in carrying out these tasks are made by the line managers, who thus, with some training and guidance from the behavioral scientists, actually do the assessing.

2. Evidence that this concept works in a wide variety of settings is convincing, and supports the idea that it merits trial within CIA. PSS is prepared to explain the concept in more detail, to explore its applicability to given office situations, and assist in its implementation where appropriate. Currently, discussions of this sort are underway with the Office of Security.

3. The referenced article suggests specifically the use of assessment in identifying managerial potential in the public service. While business and industry have been in the forefront here, it may be of interest to note that at a government-wide conference on "Implementing the Executive Development Program" sponsored by the Civil Service

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SUBJECT: Executive Director's note to the DDS re "Mid-Career Assessment"

Commission on 4-5 April 1972, considerable interest was generated in the concept, sparked by a very favorable account by the Internal Revenue Service of their use of an Executive Assessment Center for the past three years in selecting district directors at the supergrade level.

4. Mr. Colby notes that assessment at mid-career may be helpful for training and development apart from selection as such. Indeed, the literature suggests that assessment is most useful when the findings are used for just such purposes, in addition to contributing to the selection-for-management decision.

5. It is indeed true, as Mr. Colby implies, that the thrust of PSS assessment effort is (and historically has been) directed at initial selection of employees and early career guidance. Mr. Coffey is also correct in observing that assessment has not been entirely limited to this group. The assessment of employees at mid-career or later, for a variety of purposes, including that of identifying managerial potential, is by no means an infrequent experience for PSS. However, this almost always is prompted by a pending decision to be made about the single individual in question, rather than in the context of a program dealing with identification of potential or of development needs of a class or group of employees. We in PSS feel that an assessment program could contribute significantly in the latter situation, provided that it is properly integrated with and serves the purposes of a broader executive development program.


Chief, Psychological Services Staff
Office of Medical Services

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Executive Director-Comptroller

STAT Bill:

The attached memos from Dr. [] and John Tietjen are self-explanatory. If you agree with the idea of the broader approach, I will ask them to develop a plan and a proposal to try a pilot program in one component.

John W. Coffey

(DATE)

FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101
1 AUG 54 WHICH MAY BE USED.

(47)

TRANSMITTAL SLIP		DATE 18 August 1972
TO: Mr. Coffey via Mr. Wattles		
ROOM NO.	BUILDING	
REMARKS: Recommend your signature. [] STAT THIS HANDLING WILL BE [] ILLEGIB		
FROM:		
ROOM NO.	BUILDING	EXTENSION

FORM NO. 241
1 FEB 55

REPLACES FORM 36-8
WHICH MAY BE USED.

(47)

File

This has been
overtaken by events.
OMB will be doing something
about assessment in
response to objectives set
for FY 74 & 75.



7 Mar 73



After I buried this
for this long, why
shouldn't we go ahead
& ask ODS/PSS for
a proposal?



Mumma

What happened to
the paper Mr T
brought up the other
day - the one I
gave to you to have
logged in ?

SENDER WILL CHECK CLASSIFICATION TOP AND BOTTOM			
UNCLASSIFIED		CONFIDENTIAL	
		SECRET	
OFFICIAL ROUTING SLIP			
TO	NAME AND ADDRESS	DATE	INITIALS
1	Director of Medical Services 1D-4067 Hqs.	14 AUG 1972	<i>[Signature]</i>
2	<i>EXO</i>	14 Aug 72	<i>[Signature]</i>
3			
4			
5			
6			
	ACTION	DIRECT REPLY	PREPARE REPLY
	APPROVAL	DISPATCH	RECOMMENDATION
	COMMENT	FILE	RETURN
	CONCURRENCE	INFORMATION	SIGNATURE

Remarks:

John:

I seem to recall that several years ago we did some assessments on employees who had been around for awhile to determine suitability, etc., for different assignments and other reasons. **STAT**

Your comments and perhaps would be very helpful to me in responding to Mr. Colby's question on this subject. I would like to answer him by the end of next week if possible. - 18 Aug.

STAT

John W. Coffey

FOLD HERE TO RETURN TO SENDER		STAT
FROM: NAME, ADDRESS AND PHONE NO.		DATE
Deputy Director for Support 7D-26 Hqs. 		11 AUG 1972

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USE ONLY☐ CONFIDENTIAL☐ SECRET

ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

Executive Registry

72-4423

FROM:

Ex 1

Executive Director

EXTENSION

NO.

DATE

10 AUG 1972

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

RECEIVED

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OFFICER'S
INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

1. DDS

2.

3.

4.

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6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.

13.

14.

15.

Jack -

We are properly

happy with the contribution

OMS' psychological assessment

exercise makes to the selection of

new employees, and career guidance

at the outset. The attached article raises

in my mind the possibility of a "mid-

career" assessment ~~to~~ to identify

strong and weak points at that stage,

for training & leadership development

purposes if not for raw selection -

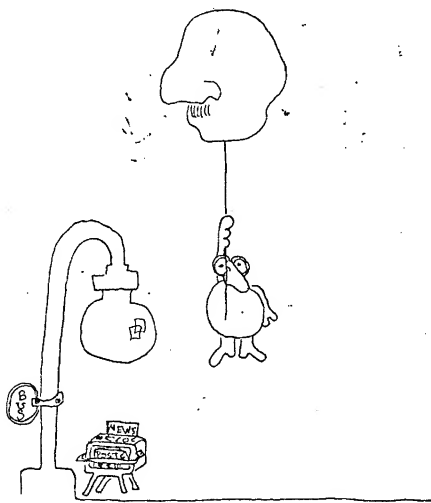
I'd be interested in your reaction

to whether there is anything in

this idea

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

IDENTIFICATION OF MANAGERIAL POTENTIAL

Raymond Pomerleau

It was once remarked that from a purely statistical standpoint the local weatherman can quite accurately predict the weather for the next 24 hours by merely announcing the actual meteorological conditions of the previous 24 hours.

Quite commonly, our predictions of the future are well founded, based upon events of the past and present, and upon assumed relationships between these observations and future events. Thus, we attempt to predict the outcome

of elections on the basis of indicators from previous elections; we attempt to predict stock market behavior from past trends of the market and certain current events; we proceed in similar fashion, based on "the record," to predict the outcome of athletic contests and most anything else.

While I would place a modicum of confidence in "Jimmy the Greek's" judgment regarding data which suggests that football is currently favored over baseball 36 per cent to 21 per cent, I have less confidence in him as a political pollster. Although Jimmy's predictions regarding athletic contests are reasonably credible, he carries no such credentials in the arena of political punditry.

While historical facts can serve to elevate one's level of sophistication to predict future events, they should not be employed to provide unqualified guidance regarding everything in the future. One may be apt to find himself in a situation similar to that of the little boy who told his teacher that he was going to draw a picture of God. The teacher said, "But Marc, no one knows what God looks like," and Marc replied, "They will when I get through!"

In a real sense, the chancy practice of predicting the managerial potential of an employee whose work history has been that of an independent performer is an enterprise which in a way resembles the effort of comparing apples with oranges. Unless we try to compare the fruits on some basis such as sweetness, texture, and size, they cannot be meaningfully compared in that they do not share a common denominator.

By the same token, not only is it risky to predict the future performance of an employee generally, the challenge is significantly more complicated when the prediction extends to such unrelated functions as budgeting, personnel, scheduling, etc. While one could systematically assess and later state that employee A is "better" than employee B in a narrowly defined specialty, any assumption using the conventional methods of assessment of either employee's future potential in a managerial capacity can at best be couched in guesswork, hunches, or simple deductions. Thus, this kind of approach provides little to reduce the gamble of such predictions.

Managerial Potential

The tacit assumption of this article then, is to argue that erroneous estimates of employee potential in the management field is precisely the sort of thing which frequently occurs in the public service; a practice which underlies much of the past disappointing effort in the area of managerial succession. Since incumbent executives express greater certitude in ranking an employee on the basis of his occupational specialty than in his general managerial potential, it is customary to employ the former dimension as the only viable criterion for promotion to managerial positions. We probably can all recall classmates who, because of their brilliance were tabbed as "most likely to succeed," yet somehow failed to make their mark in their career life; while others who spent their academic life in comparative obscurity later achieved significant success in their careers. Part of the explanation for this certainly is the fact that although one may distinguish himself in a certain occupation, he very well might not achieve similar accomplishments in other fields or occupations.

The Renaissance Man is dead; today one is more apt to reach the heights of personal success only if he is engaged in an activity which taps his area of greatest potential. Simply put: while Winston Churchill may go down in the annals of history as a great statesman, had he chosen art as his career he may have merely ranked as a mediocre weekend artist. Analogously, while Henry Rowen, former president of Rand, was regarded by his colleagues as an out-

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standing analyst, they nevertheless faulted him for his serious shortcomings as a manager.

While the "Peter Principle" in whimsically exaggerated form declares that, "in a hierarchy every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence" (mediocrity), the truth of the matter is that frequently an employee is considered mediocre because he is being evaluated while performing in an area in which he professes little expertise. Some of the qualifications which are deemed desirable for functioning in strictly managerial roles are not always found in an employee whose success has experientially been in a different field.

We all know of too many cases where a high-powered individual performer experiences difficulty when he reaches a point where his success no longer hinges on what he can do personally, but rather on his ability to coordinate the work of others. We know, too, that all individuals have specific assets and liabilities which generally determine the quality of job performance. Therefore, a conscious effort needs to be expended to promote individuals who, when moved into positions of increased responsibilities, will be able to utilize those skills which are part of their assets.

Since we know that increasing responsibility in hierarchical organizations means an increasing obligation for personnel supervision, this would suggest that promotion places greater demands on human relations skills. Therefore, although an employee may possess a high degree of competence in a very specialized occupational activity, he may be seriously deficient in those skills and talents needed to function effectively in a broad managerial field.

Early Identification

Competence in one occupational specialty does not necessarily serve the assumption of comparability in another occupational group. To be sure, there is a rich reservoir of managerial potential in the federal service. What is lacking is a reliable system that insures the early identification of the right person. Further, the identification and the subsequent selection of an employee with managerial potential should be thought of as the first and one of the most important steps in the much broader process of his/her career development. Since an employee's functional progression on either the administrative or the technical career ladder is charted quite early in his career (GS 9-12), it is imperative that he be identified early in order that an appropriate training and development schedule could be arranged preparatory to his assumption of a top-level position.

Whether explicitly recognized or not, any system for identifying managerial potential takes place within the context of an occupationally oriented career system. Consequently, we often proceed on the premise that an employee's managerial potential can be predicted in terms of a single index, principally the one dealing with technical competence.

Career mobility patterns suggest that those incumbent executives in general administrative occupations are typically those who have first distinguished themselves by superior performance in a specialized field. For example, available evidence tends to show that career managers have reached top executive positions through their mastery of one or two occupational specialties, and that some 70 per cent of those in grade levels GS 15-18 have remained in essentially the same occupations over the past ten years. Thus, roughly three out of every four career executives of the managerial class possess expertise in a technical specialty.

This data would seem to confirm the belief that currently the best route to

top managerial positions in the federal service is first through the vehicle of technical competence, with a subsequent cross-over to the administrative career ladder. Of course, this does not entirely preclude the fact that a certain number of employees are selected strictly on the strength of their managerial abilities; nor does it exclude either the possibility that certain ambitious individuals who understand the bureaucratic lay of the land cultivate good rapport with their supervisors while at the same time manipulating the system to serve their best advantage.

The vital question which emerges however, is whether past performance in a strictly technically oriented occupation is sufficiently predictive of future effectiveness in a general management field. Should generalist line positions such as an IRS district director be filled by an individual whose experience was gained within a narrowly circumscribed function such as audit, collection, etc.? How does one know whether a veterinarian *qua* lab scientist is suitable for strictly managerial roles when his experience has largely consisted of inspecting animals and conducting research to combat disease in animals, and when he is not familiar with the usual pressures of management and devoid of specific preparation for the higher responsibilities of general veterinary services?

Returning to our original question then, while a good specialist could conceivably become a better specialist, can it be assured that he would likely make a good manager? Do the two types of responsibilities and the qualities called for share an essence of comparability? Are the duties of a manager customarily encountered by the individual performer? For example, we know that for the most part a specialist's degree of competence is measured on a scale which is heavily weighted upon those actions involving technical aspects of his agency's operations or related activities which generally do not extend to relationships with various publics. On the other hand, while it would be expected that the dominant attribute of the middle manager would be problem-solving skills and technical competence in a unifunctional area, at the executive level he would additionally need to possess the requisite talents for assuming multifunctional responsibilities and the ability to deal with broad ideas and abstractions.

Functional Incompatibility

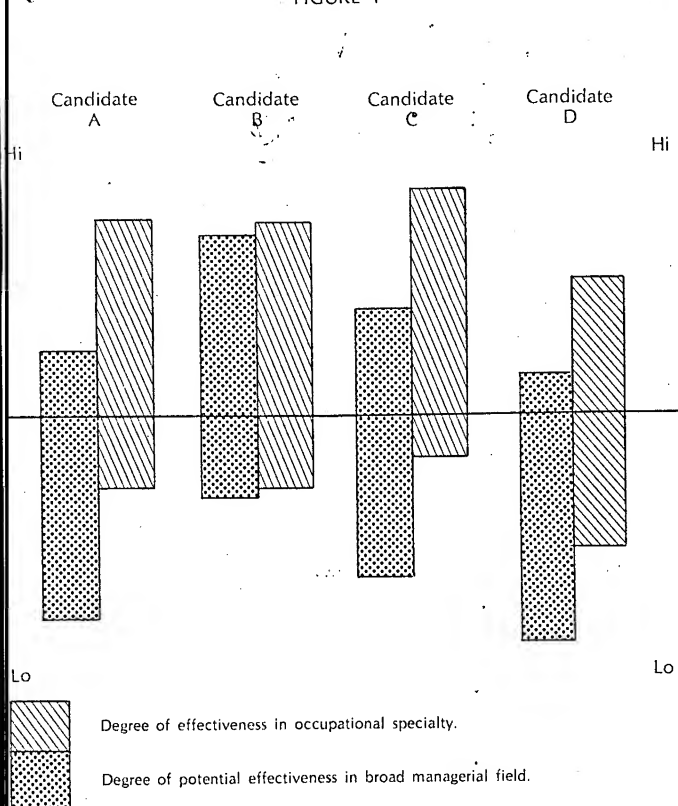
Fundamentally, the appearance of functional incompatibility in the performance of the respective roles of technician and manager is readily observable in the sense that characteristically the technician is constantly in search of the one correct answer, while problem solving for the manager is usually an enterprise which seeks to develop several acceptable answers, none of which may be totally correct. While the bench scientist seeks to maximize, the manager seeks to satisfy; or as Charles Lindblom would have it, the decision-making model is not a rational comprehensive one, rather it is one of incrementalism hammered out on the anvil of compromise.

It can readily be seen, then, that the angles of vision and the decision-making activities for each one is significantly different, calling for distinctive and not always compatible sets of talents and abilities. It is these differences that any early identification of managerial potential must address itself to. Now, the question that should inevitably follow is: should managers be selected on the basis of their technical competence, or should they be chosen as well for their managerial skill? Ideally, of course, it would be best to select those persons who could achieve agency goals by integrating the task and human requirements into a unified system. Although this is more an ideal

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FIGURE 1

Management Assessment Process



Since sound performance in a particular occupation shouldn't necessarily qualify one for advancement to a managerial position, staffing decisions ought to take into account the requirements of the managerial position, and then match the potential abilities (in our illustration above, Candidate B) to perform in that position. This more realistic approach in identifying individuals considered for their first move into managerial ranks would better serve the needs of personnel staffing decisions and more accurately respond to the question: identifying potential for what?

If we were to assume that there are only a select few among the technically competent who possess the potential to function in a general managerial field, then the task for federal agencies would be to assess the requisite abilities of each candidate by simulating the problems and challenges of the level of management for which he is being considered in order to assess the specific behavioral patterns he would manifest in a given job sample. This emphasis on observing interactive behaviors in an organizational setting, instead of the traditional and less reliable approach of identifying specific traits, finds current support in the writings of T. O. Jacobs, J. P. Campbell, and others.

While certainly no one would seriously cavil over the assumption that a formally structured system for identifying high managerial potential is more equitable than the natural selection process, nevertheless, seeking out the "promotables" and predicting their relative managerial potential remains a significant operational problem. After all, sizing up a person's managerial potential should not consist of a mere snapshot of his present managerial abilities and behavior dispositions, but must also consider those talents required for a position quite different from the one he currently holds. To satisfy that end, we find an increasing utilization of management assessment processes both in the public and private sectors because of their high face validity in determining the potential of individuals for higher-level positions.

The immediate advantages of an assessment program with its multiple evaluative techniques is that it is capable of simulating the conditions under which a manager works, thereby allowing for an evaluation of managerial skills by presenting problems of both an interpersonal and administrative nature which are appropriate to the needs of an organization's unique environment. Indeed, only by applying job-related measuring instruments (e.g., interview, management game, in-basket exercise, leaderless group discussion, etc.) against agency-specified behavioral characteristics can a true validity test be made applicable. For example, the in-basket exercise is a managerial device which suitably simulates an important part of the manager's role. In this relatively unstructured exercise, the participant is presented with a set of materials a manager might be confronted with in a job situation. The items range from routine office memoranda, notes of incoming phone calls, and letters, to more detailed priority items requiring immediate action. The exercise is used primarily to evaluate the manner in which the participant approaches and solves the many problems.

Reports derived on the basis of studies conducted in those organizations in the private sector which employ a formal management assessment process indicate that the method seems to be most valid in situations in which the position for which the participants are being considered is quite different from their present position. For instance, the promotion of technicians into a management position, by simulating the problems and challenges of the level of management for which the individual is being considered, it is possible for

than the rule, these are precisely the kind of individuals who need to be identified as possessing potential for assuming higher managerial positions.

Even more problematical perhaps, is how one should proceed to predict the degree of potential effectiveness of individuals in the general managerial field. To begin with, an analysis of characteristics which could determine managerial potential must be undertaken. Secondly, this effort must be followed by the construction of predictive or evaluative procedures to assess the degree of managerial abilities in specific job-related areas. In this way one could choose from among candidates who are outstanding individual performers in their particular occupational specialty those individuals who have potential comparable potential to function as managers.

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management to determine the potential of the participant for the higher-level position. Of course, the traditional informational inputs, such as supervisor evaluation, peer ratings, performance record, and other evaluative indices suitably augment the efficacy of the entire appraisal process.

Conclusion

In sum, the basic assumption of this article has been to suggest that typically in the public service the process of identifying employees as possessing managerial potential is largely based on their past performance in a technical specialty. What has been questioned is whether this guiding principle is sufficiently predictive of effective performance in a general management field. Finally, one strategy which is recommended in order to enhance the predictive accuracy of identifying people who possess managerial potential is through the utilization of a process involving multiple assessment techniques. It is believed that the judicious employment of a formal management assessment process would equip us with an additional instrument to better assure that those employees who are identified do in fact possess managerial potential.

Raymond Pomerleau is an associate professor of political science and public administration at San Francisco State College. In 1970, while on leave of absence from San Francisco State College, Dr. Pomerleau served as an associate director of the Executive Seminar Center in Berkeley. In 1971 he was a NASPAA Public Administration Fellow with the Bureau of Executive Manpower, U.S. Civil Service Commission.

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